

105 port subject to her unrestricted sovereignty. In spite of these difficulties, which placed her at a serious disadvantage as compared with Estonia and Latvia, the success of Lithuania in organizing the country commercially, developing agricultural production, and finding foreign markets for dairy produce has been remarkable.

Nor are the problems of external and internal policy by any means identical in the three countries. But there are certain factors in the situation of all three of them which tend to link them together—in the minds of the outside world at any rate, and to some extent even in their own.

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●131 The three Baltic States were all until recently part of the Russian Empire. They form, in effect, although Lithuania has no common frontier with the Soviet Union, a buffer between Germany and Russia. As such, they are as much the potential battle-field for a clash between these two great ideological protagonists as they are the potential victims of agreement between them for their partition. Geographically, they occupy the seaboard and cover a territory which in the past were regarded in Germany as a natural field for trade and colonization, and in Russia as an essential, if not a vital, outlet to the Baltic Sea. After the War, the Revolution, and the attainment of independence by the three States, the Soviet Union's Baltic seaboard was reduced to less than one hundred miles at the head of the Gulf of Finland, and the natural lines of communication from central Russia to the sea-ports of Tallinn (Reval), Paldiski (Baltic Port), Riga, and Liepāja (Libau) were blocked by the new frontiers.

Their geographical position has also exposed them to propaganda in favour of the political doctrines of their neighbours. In the immediate post-war period Bolshevism contributed the principal source of anxiety; Germany at that time was still weakened by defeat. From 1933 onwards a new preoccupation in the form of National-Socialism came upon them from the West. Thus, in the political sphere their perpetual lot seems to be the steering of a difficult course between Scylla and Charybdis.

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474 In the economic sphere also Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania share many problems in common; the dislocation caused by the War and the Soviet Revolution, by the agrarian reform and the loss of former markets and their natural hinterland in Russia and Poland across the new frontiers, has borne heavily upon them; all three States have populations predominantly engaged in agriculture; all have striven hard to intensify agrarian production, discover new markets, and develop their industry. Co-operative organization, especially as regards agriculture, is an outstanding feature in all three countries, and has played an important part in the development of production; shortage of capital has equally been a cause of retarding it.

642 of diplomatic relations, led to the resignation of the Tubelis Government. But the Cabinet formed on March 24, with Father Mironas as Prime Minister, included both M. Tubelis himself and M. Lozoraitis, who retained the portfolio of Foreign Affairs; while any hope of a broadening of the base of representation was disappointed by the exclusion of the Opposition from the new Government.

V. FOREIGN RELATIONS¹

INTRODUCTION

- 131 THE emergence of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania as independent States required the fall of two great empires, the Russian and the German. To-day their international significance lies in the fact that, together with Poland, they form a buffer between two first-class modern Powers, the Third German Reich and the Soviet Union, and this not merely in a strategic but also in an ideological and an economic sense: strategic, since in the event of either Great Power attacking the other, the role of Belgium in the Great War might well be thrust upon the Baltic States,² and their territory be converted into a theatre of war; ideological, because they constitute a narrow wedge between Communist and National-Socialist totalitarian States, to whose rival propagandas they are dangerously exposed; and finally economic, since, on the one hand, the whole area consists of thinly populated agricultural country which is regarded by Germany as being peculiarly suited to extensive German colonization, while, on the other hand, it is a corridor for Russian trade with Western Europe and a seaboard which the Soviet Union might at some time consider it desirable to repossess. Moreover, if either Russia or Germany were to take possession of these countries, the Baltic Sea would be in danger of becoming little more than a private lake.

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829 This antithesis between Germany and Russia did not, however, become apparent in any marked degree until comparatively recently. For the first decade of their history the new Baltic States regarded the Soviet Union as the common menace; Germany was a defeated and disarmed enemy, and it was not until the rise to power of the Nazi movement in 1933 that they began to entertain fears of danger from that quarter.

The problem of how to secure some measures of security *vis-à-vis* the Soviet Union confronted all the north-eastern Succession States,

¹ For a detailed record of the Baltic in international affairs, see relevant sections of the *Survey of International Affairs* for 1920-3, 1924, 1925 (vol. II), 1927, 1932, 1934, 1935 (vol. I), and 1936, issued under the auspices of the Royal Institute of International Affairs and published by the Oxford University Press.

² Although, since the loss of Vilna, Lithuania has no longer a common frontier with the U.S.S.R.

648 including Finland and Poland; but the policy which they adopted in
829 dealing with it varied according to their respective geographical positions and their different political and economic connexions with pre-War Russia, as well as to their special affinities with, or revulsions from, other Powers or one another.

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648 Estonia and Latvia had most to fear from the U.S.S.R. and most to gain from a close Baltic Union, partly on account of their common frontiers with the U.S.S.R., which exposed them to the infiltration of Communism to a dangerous extent, but chiefly because their territory had formerly contained the main outlets of Russian trade with the West. The old Russian ports of Riga, Windau (Ventspils), and Libau (Liepāja) were now Latvian, while Reval (Tallinn), Pernau (Pärnu), and Baltic Port (Paldiski) had fallen to Estonia. Of these, Libau and Baltic Port had been Tsarist Russia's principal naval bases, while Riga had been her third largest Western port, ranking after St. Petersburg and Odessa. All of them were linked up by railways with Great Russia.¹ The serious economic consequences for the new Republics, even more than for the U.S.S.R., of their political separation from their natural hinterland, are described elsewhere.²

648 Lithuania, who (after 1920) had no common frontier with the U.S.S.R., had less cause for anxiety in that direction, and was, therefore, relatively indifferent to the advantages of a Baltic Union. In any case successive Governments were preoccupied by prolonged disputes with Poland over Vilna, and later with Germany over Memel.³ The Vilna dispute, in particular, prevented her for a long time from participating in any form of Baltic bloc, since the other interested Powers refused to sign any pact which might involve them in a conflict with Poland, while Lithuania herself refused to sign one from which that possibility had been eliminated.⁴

Finland⁵ also, owing to her geographical position, was spared extreme fear of the Soviet Union, since even if the latter were to become involved in a war with Poland or Germany, Finnish territory and neutrality would not necessarily be violated. Moreover, a large proportion of the population, and particularly of the aristocracy, was Swedish, and there was a thriving Swedish political party; in consequence Finland showed a strong tendency to orientate towards the Scandinavian rather than towards the Baltic States, and a marked

¹ See map.

² See below, pp. 192-4.

³ These disputes are treated in detail in Section VI, p. 89.

[439] ⁴ Latvia's attitude towards the Vilna dispute was complicated by the fact that the trunk railway connecting the port of Liepāja with Rönne, in Russia, passed through Lithuanian territory before entering Poland, so that her trade with that country, as well as with Russia, was affected by the closing of the Lithuanian-Polish frontier.

⁵ Finland's foreign policy is dealt with in more detail in the handbook in this series dealing with the Scandinavian States.

The Estonian and Latvian Governments appear to have informed Lithuania that they regarded the establishment of normal diplomatic relations with Poland as highly desirable; while the French and British diplomatic representatives in both capitals used their influence to urge an amicable settlement. On March 19 the Lithuanian Government accepted without reserve all the Polish propositions, and received a reply on the 20th in which the Polish Government assured the new Lithuanian Legation in Warsaw 'all conditions of normal activity'.

Negotiations between the two countries were begun almost immediately, and proceeded so successfully that by the beginning of June three conventions had been concluded for the opening of postal and railway communications, and of river navigation, while further agreements relating to aerial communications and to a commercial treaty were under negotiation.

Although the Vilna dispute has reference to an area of inconsiderable economic importance, it has had far-reaching effects both on the domestic history of Lithuania and on the relations of the Baltic States with one another and with the Soviet Union. These have been described above, and it must suffice here to recall that the efforts to achieve Baltic solidarity, in relation first to Soviet Russia and later to Nazi Germany, have always been complicated by the enduring hostility between Lithuania and Poland.

2. MEMEL (KLAIPEDA)

Introductory. The Memel Territory, consisting of the port of Memel and a strip of land about 70 miles long and from 10 to 20 miles broad, is bounded on the south by the East Prussian frontier and on the north-east by what used to be the pre-War Russo-German frontier but is now Lithuanian territory. It controls the right bank of the Niemen (Nemunas), a waterway of great importance for the floating of timber down to the Baltic from the hinterland, and embraces nearly three-quarters of the seaboard between the East Prussian and Latvian frontiers; without it, Lithuania would have no port on the Baltic Sea.

The city of Memel was founded in 1252 by the German Order of the Sword, from whom it was taken over in 1328 by the Teutonic Order, as a centre for the conquest and conversion of the Borussians; on the dissolution of the Teutonic Order in the sixteenth century, the city and surrounding territory passed into the hands of the Hohenzollerns. By the fifteenth century the indigenous population had been virtually exterminated, but Lithuanian immigration was encouraged by the German rulers until the eighteenth century, when a policy of German colonization was first adopted. Even then the

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ripening fruits of tomorrow through the telescope of History—that is asking too much. There must be, after all, some standard one dare not destroy lest the fruits of tomorrow prove to be rotten. If I think thus it is because for the last two thousand years or more there have been not only brigands, conquistadors, and hangmen, but also people for whom evil was evil and had to be called evil. Mass slaughter, the terror of revolution, the craze for gold, the misery of the working classes: who knows what dimensions these flaws might reach if every man believed he must keep silent and accept? In rebelling, I believe I protect the fruits of tomorrow better than my friend who keeps silent. I assume the risk and I pay. If I were not willing to do so, I would now be writing an ode in praise of the Generalissimo. When one has some training in poetic technique, it is not particularly difficult to compose fine-sounding, rhythmical praise of *The Glorious Hero*.

The Baltic states—Estonia, Lithuania, and Latvia—lie, as we know, on the edge of the great mainland of the continent. A gulf separates them from Finland; the Baltic Sea, from Sweden. Their inhabitants are not Slavic. The language of the Estonians is related to Finnish. The Lithuanian and Latvian tongues, which resemble each other, still constitute a linguistic riddle; no one knows the original home of these tribes who found their way to the lower reaches of the Niemen and Dvina rivers. We know only that the exterminated Prussians spoke a similar language. Of the three Baltic nations, only the Lithuanians succeeded in the past in creating and maintaining for a certain time a large state whose borders extended to the Dnieper.

These three sparsely settled countries underwent an intensive colonization, chiefly German and Polish, which marked the advance of Christianity. The result was